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## DESCRIPTION

CONTENTS FILE PLAY BACK PERMISSION METHOD, AND  
RECORDING MEDIUM HAVING RECORDED PLAY BACK  
SOFTWARE FOR PLAYING BACK CONTENTS FILE

## Technical Field

The present invention relates to a method of permitting the play back of a contents file down loaded from a server to a terminal computer and to a recording medium having recorded play back software for playing back the contents file.

## Background Art

There are available audio data files of, for example, a WAV format and a MP3 format as contents files. To enjoy music by playing back an audio data file, play back software for playing back the audio data file is necessary separately. That is, when it is desired to enjoy contents files by playing back them, it is necessary to install play back software according to each type of contents files on a computer and then to get a favorite contents file and to play back it by the play back software.

When play back software is installed on a computer once, it can be used as it is for a long period of time in many cases even if an upgraded version of the software is released. In contrast, while a user may have only one contents file, when the

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user plays back it repeatedly, he or she gets tired of it. To cope with this problem, suppliers of contents files create many types of contents files so that operators of terminal computers, who are users of contents files, select favorite contents files from the many contents files and sequentially store them in their terminal computers.

In particular, with the recent rapid popularization of communication executed through the Internet communication network, many users access servers, in which contents files are stored, from terminal computers through the Internet communication network and download contents files stored therein to the terminal computers.

The contents files include pay contents files and free contents files. However, when a contents file is downloaded once from a server to a terminal computer, it is possible to copy the contents file from the terminal computer to which it was downloaded to other terminal computer and to play back the copied contents file through play back software installed on the other terminal computer. Since the contents files are protected by a copy right, it is not preferable that the contents files be copied without any restriction in the circumstances where the creators of the contents files have nothing to do therewith, even if they are free contents files. Further, it is also not preferable to permit the unauthorized copies of the pay contents files because the users of them are treated unequally thereby in money.





Incidentally, in the case of pay contents files, it is necessary that pay members as well as operators who paid a fee only can download the pay contents files. It cannot be discriminated from the client ID given to playback software whether or not a user is any one of a pay member and a user who paid a fee. It can be discriminated from an user ID whether or not the user is the pay member, and the like. Accordingly, both playback software and a contents file can incorporate user IDs, in addition to the client IDs, and it is sufficient for the playback software to be set such that it permits the playback of a contents file only when the client ID and user ID thereof agree with the client ID and user ID of the contents file.

When the user ID is used together with the client ID, it is possible to cause a relatively large contents file to be securely stored in terminal computers and then to permit the play back of the contents file in such a manner that a contents file, in which no user ID is incorporated, is distributed as, for example, a CD ROM or the like or is down loaded and then only the pay members are permitted to incorporate their user IDs in the contents file.



of a contents file is not aware of by other persons. It cannot be aware of by the other persons that the contents file is started up when other function such as a watch, or the like is displayed in a state in which the contents file is started up but is not displayed. Further, whether or not a contents file is present can be confirmed only by checking the change of a display when a cursor is put thereon.

### Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a view showing a network to which the present invention is applied; FIG. 2 is a flowchart showing a setup sequence of play back software; FIG. 3 is a conceptual view showing an arrangement of a contents file; FIG. 4 is a view showing examples of the icon of the play back software; FIG. 5 is a view showing an example of the icon when a contents file is played back; and FIG. 6 shows time charts showing contents played back from a contents file.

## Best Mode of Carrying Out the Invention

With reference to FIG. 1, reference numeral 1 denotes a server to which a plurality of terminal computers 3 are connected through the Internet communication network 2. Play back software is installed on the respective terminal computers 3. The play back software is recorded on a recording medium 4 such as a CDROM, a DVD, and the like which is distributed as a supplement, or the

like appended to a magazine. Thus, the play back software is installed from the recoding medium 4, while it may be down loaded from the server 1 through the Internet communication network 2. The play back software does not work only when it is installed, and it must be set up without fail.

Referring to FIG. 2, when the setup of the play back software starts, first, it is selected whether or not a user of the software is a registered member (S1). The registered member means a member registered to an organization which operates the server 1. The registered member is authorized to download not only free contents files but also pay contents files of the various kinds of the contents files stored in the server 1. In contrast, a user, who is not a member but has installed the play back software, is authorized to download only the free contents files.

When a registered member sets up the play back software, he or she inputs a user ID, which was given to him or her at the time of member registration, and his or her profile data to a terminal computers 3 (S2). While data items required to the profile data may be set according to need, it is contemplated that they include, for example, sexuality, age, occupation, place of installation of the terminal computer 3, and so on. On the completion of input of data for these items, the terminal computer 3 is connected to the server through the Internet communication network 2, and the certification of the user ID is performed (S3). When the user fails to get the certification, he or she must return



Note that the play back software is programmed such that all the jobs, which are subsequent to the query whether or not member registration is performed (S1), the request for input of user ID and client ID (S2 and S7) and the input of user ID and client ID (S2 and S7), are executed automatically. Thus, when the play back software is installed on the terminal computer 3,

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the jobs up to the completion of setup is automatically carried out.

When the setup is completed as described above, it is possible for the user to access the server 1 from the terminal computer 3, to download a desired contents file from the various kinds of the contents files stored in the server 1, and to play back it through the play back software. However, the contents files include the pay contents files the play back of which is permitted only to members and the free contents files the play back of which is permitted also to persons other than the members.

Each contents file has a structure conceptually shown in FIG. 5. That is, each contents file has an incorporating section 51 in which a flag is incorporated which indicates whether the contents file is pay or free, an incorporating section 52 in which an user ID is incorporated, and an incorporating section 53 in which a client ID is incorporated, and these sections are preset in the file. No data is incorporated in the user ID incorporating section 52 and in the client ID incorporating section 53 at the time each contents file is stored in the server 1, while the flag for indicating whether it is pay or free is incorporated in the incorporating section 51. Note that contents main data is incorporated in a section 54 other than these incorporating sections.

When a user downloads a free contents file, the play back software incorporates the client ID of the user, which was

The down load of a pay contents file may be prohibited unless a user ID is input and certified at the time it is down loaded. However, the down load itself of a pay contents file may be permitted





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Then, a predetermined enjoyable or relaxing moving picture and music are played back for a predetermined period of time.

When the contents to be played back take 45 seconds in their entirety, a commercial message of 15 seconds may be sandwiched between the front section of the contents and the rear section thereof each taking 15 seconds, as shown in FIG. 6(a). Alternately, a commercial message of 15 seconds may be played back after the main section of the contents is played back for 30 seconds, as shown in FIG. 6(b). Incidentally, if the server 1 reads the client ID on the terminal computer 3 side first at the time the daily contents file is down loaded to the terminal computer 3, it is possible to down load the contents of the daily contents file, which seem most suitable to the profile data corresponding to the client ID, referring to the profile data. A plurality of the daily contents files may be prepared, or the section of the commercial message may be replaced with other one. When it is found that a user is interested in, for example, a car, a previous commercial message may be replaced with a commercial message of a new car, and when the user is fond of tourism, it may be replaced with a commercial message of a travel agent.

When the daily contents file is played back, the play back software automatically deletes it after it has been played back. Note that an entertainment section other than a commercial message can be stored in the server 1 as a free or pay contents file, can be down loaded to the terminal computer 3, and can be played

